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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 066596

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SUBJECT: TRAVEL WARNING - YEMEN

**¶1.** The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the high security threat level in Yemen due to terrorist activities. The Department recommends that American citizens defer non-essential travel to Yemen. American citizens remaining in Yemen despite this warning should monitor the U.S. Embassy website and should make contingency emergency plans. This replaces the Travel Warning for Yemen issued April 24, 2009, to update information on attacks against foreigners in the Northern governorate of Saada.

**¶2.** The security threat level remains high due to terrorist activities in Yemen. On the morning of September 17, 2008 armed terrorists attacked the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a, Yemen. A number of explosions occurred in the vicinity of the Embassy's main gate. Several Yemeni security personnel and one Embassy security guard were killed, as were a few individuals waiting to gain entry to the Embassy, one of whom was a U.S. citizen.

**¶3.** U.S. Embassy employees have been advised to exercise caution when choosing restaurants, hotels or visiting tourist areas in Sanaa in order to avoid large gatherings of foreigners and expatriates. Only limited travel outside of the capital is authorized at this time.

**¶4.** U.S. citizens who travel to or remain in Yemen despite this warning should exercise caution and take prudent security measures, including maintaining a high level of vigilance, avoiding crowds and demonstrations, keeping a low profile, varying times and routes for all travel, and ensuring travel documents are current. American citizens in Yemen are advised to exercise particular caution at locations frequented by foreigners nationwide, including

restaurants and hotels frequented by expatriates. From time to time, the Embassy may restrict official Americans from restaurants, hotels, or shopping areas. The Department of State strongly encourages American citizens to consult the most recent Warden Messages on the U.S. Embassy Website to get up-to-date information on security conditions. Americans who believe they are being followed or threatened while driving in urban centers should proceed as quickly as possible to the nearest police station or major intersection and request assistance from the officers in the blue-and-white police cars stationed there.

¶15. The Department remains concerned about possible attacks by extremist individuals or groups against U.S. citizens, facilities, businesses, and perceived interests. On March 15, 2009, four South Korean tourists were killed in a suicide bomb attack in the city of Shibam in southern Hadramout province. On March 18, 2009, a South Korean motorcade was attacked by a suicide bomber near Sana'a International Airport. On January 17, 2008, suspected al-Qa-ida operatives ambushed a tourist convoy in the eastern Hadramout Governorate, killing two Belgians. On July 2, 2007, suspected al-Qa-ida operatives carried out a vehicle-borne explosive device attack on tourists at the Belquis Temple in Marib, which resulted in the deaths of eight Spanish tourists and two Yemenis. The targeting of tourist sites by al-Qa-ida may represent an escalation in terror tactics in Yemen. On February 3, 2006, 23 convicts, including known affiliates of al-Qa-ida, escaped from a high-security prison in Sanaa, some of whom remain at large. Two of the escapees were killed in vehicle-based suicide attacks on oil facilities near Mukalla and Marib on September

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15, 2006. Those attacks were followed by the arrest the next day in Sanaa of four suspected al Qa-ida operatives, who had stockpiled explosives and weapons.

¶16. The Government of Yemen has been battling al Houthi rebels in and around the northern governorate of Saada intermittently since 2004. In June 2009, a group of foreigners was attacked in Saada, resulting in three confirmed deaths. There have been no claims of responsibility in this incident and the investigation is ongoing.

¶17. U.S. citizens traveling in Yemen should be aware that local authorities occasionally place restrictions on the travel of foreigners to parts of the country experiencing unrest. In addition, the U.S. Embassy itself often restricts travel of official personnel to the tribal areas north and east of Sanaa, such as the governorates of Amran, Al Jawf, Hajja, Marib, Saada, and Shabwa. Travelers should be in contact with the Embassy for up-to-date information on such restrictions.

¶18. Travel by boat through the Red Sea or near the Socotra Islands in the Gulf of Aden presents the risk of pirate attacks. Since the beginning of 2009, 40 vessels reportedly have been attacked and 23 vessels seized in the area. In some cases, crew members were held for ransom. Following the April 2009 hijacking of a U.S. cargo vessel and the subsequent rescue of the vessel's captain, resulting in the deaths of three pirates, Somali pirates threatened to retaliate against American citizens transiting the region. The threat of piracy extends into the Indian Ocean off the coast of the Horn of Africa as well. See our International Maritime Piracy Fact Sheet. If travel to any of these areas is unavoidable, travelers may reduce the risk to personal security if such travel is undertaken by air or with an armed escort provided by

a local tour company.

¶19. U.S. citizens should register at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa and enroll in the warden system (emergency alert network) to obtain updated information on travel and security in Yemen. This can be done online prior to arrival in Yemen at the State Department's registration web page.

¶10. The U.S. Embassy is located at Dhahr Himyar Zone, Sheraton Hotel District, P.O. Box 22347. The telephone number of the Consular Section is (967) (1) 755-2000, extension 2153 or 2266. The fax number is (967) (1) 303-175. The after-hours emergency number is (967) (1) 755-2000 (press zero for extension) or (967) 733213509. From time to time the Embassy may temporarily close or suspend public services for security reasons. Emergency assistance to U.S. citizens during non-business hours (or when public access is restricted) is available through Embassy duty personnel.

¶11. Current information on travel and security in Yemen may be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States and Canada or, from outside the United States and Canada, 1-202-501-¶14444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Time Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays.) U.S. citizens should consult the Country Specific Information for Yemen and the Worldwide Caution on the State Department's Internet site. Up-to-date information on security conditions can also be viewed at the U.S. Embassy Sanaa's American Citizens Services web page.

¶12. Minimize considered.

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